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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [KSAC](#) [MA](#)

SUBJECT: ANNUAL OSAC CRIME/SAFETY REPORT FOR MADAGASCAR/COMOROS

REF: STATE 199547

1. OVERALL CRIME AND SAFETY SITUATION:

Crime occurs in Madagascar as it does in most major cities in the world. However, despite the continued impoverished economy Antananarivo has seen a decrease in violent crimes. Moreover, the recent successful Presidential election has contributed to the reduction in crime across the board. Criminal gangs comprised of former felons, ex-military and police do exist, but have been kept under control by aggressive law enforcement efforts. Many criminals possess weapons such as Ak-47 assault rifles and pistols stolen from military armories during the political crisis in 2001/2002.

The vast majority of crime that now occurs in Antananarivo is petty street crime. Thieves use stealth and surprise to commit crimes of opportunity such as pick pocketing and "grab and run".

The last incident involving a violent crime against a member of the U.S. Embassy community took place in 1997. Americans visiting Madagascar should not expect to experience any hostility or aggression because of their citizenship. In fact, with the current government, the atmosphere for Americans is welcoming and receptive. There have been no visible signs of anti-Americanism displayed by the press or the government of Madagascar. Americans who visit Madagascar are encouraged to register with the Consular Section located at the Embassy and to check the most recent consular information sheet on Madagascar located at <http://travel.state.gov>

COMOROS

The U.S. Government has no permanent presence in Comoros. For American Citizens Services (AMCIT) the Consular Officer can be contacted at the American Embassy in Antananarivo at 261 (20) 22 212 157. American citizens who visit Comoros are encouraged to register with the Consular section in Antananarivo. Registration can be done online at <http://travel.state.gov> and travelers can also review the Consular information sheet on Comoros.

Criminal activity is frowned upon within Comoran culture. Criminal acts against foreigners are extremely rare and the Regional Security Officer (RSO) considers Comoros to be an extremely safe community. However, if you are a victim of a crime you are advised not to resist, to remain calm, and to report the incident as soon as possible to the RSO, cell phone: (261) 33-11-392-03 or the Consular Officer

2. POLITICAL VIOLENCE:

Putting aside its past of political instability, Madagascar successfully and peacefully completed its 2006 presidential election. The country is currently waiting for the High Constitutional Court to verify that incumbent Marc Ravalomanana has been re-elected, in what is viewed by the international community as a free and fair election. At present, very little political violence or civil unrest exists in Madagascar. The political process, which allows for dissent and opposing views, appears to be stable. Although protests and demonstrations do occur infrequently, they tend to be peaceful, with minimal effect on the security of citizens or visitors.

Due to the ongoing military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, recent attacks in Saudi Arabia, and past terrorist attacks in the United States, Americans overseas are encouraged to remain vigilant to their surroundings and to exercise caution. Americans should avoid large crowds and gatherings, keep a low profile, and vary routes and times of all required travel.

13. POST-SPECIFIC CONCERNS:

Crimes of opportunity are the most common type of incidents the local police deal with. Street crime and other forms of petty crime exist in most countries with high poverty levels, and Madagascar is no exception. Thefts from unlocked vehicles, pick pocketing, and similar crimes are the most frequently reported incidents involving westerners. American citizens as well as other foreign visitors routinely report petty crime to their Embassies in Antananarivo. Nearly all foreigners stand out among the local population and, in so doing, are readily identifiable as potential targets of opportunity. Therefore, street crime is the biggest threat to

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American visitors coming to Madagascar. Madagascar is prone to seasonal cyclones (hurricanes), which can do substantial damage, particularly in coastal areas.

14. POLICE RESPONSE:

Two organizations are charged with maintaining peace and security in Madagascar, and are responsible for upholding its laws. The primary organization responsible for areas of Madagascar outside of the major cities is the Gendarmerie. The organization responsible for Antananarivo and other cities in Madagascar is the National Police. The U.S. Embassy in Antananarivo maintains excellent relations with both organizations.

Because Madagascar is a developing country, with the majority of the population living in extreme poverty, resources available to the local police services are very limited. Associated with this, police responsiveness to citizens and visitors can be considered limited and sometimes ineffective. Response to crime scenes can be slow to non-existent for average citizens. However, many members of the National Police and Gendarmerie are capable and professional.

In Madagascar, Military/Police roadblocks are common. At these roadblocks, it is recommended that the traveler slow down (to a crawl) and be prepared to show identification. If the police/military personnel indicate that they want you to stop, then do so. Keep your windows rolled up, but show your identification. If you find yourself the recipient of excessive attention, detention, or harassment, to include the payment of impromptu "tolls", contact the Embassy as soon as possible.

During an emergency, visitors to Antananarivo can contact local police at telephone numbers 117 and 22-227-35 or 030-23-801-40/813-00 (cellular). Visitors can also contact the U.S. Embassy in Antananarivo, at telephone number 22-212-57 if assistance is needed in communicating with law enforcement officials.

15. MEDICAL EMERGENCIES:

In case of a medical emergency, perform first aid and take the patient directly to the Clinique des Soeurs located in Antananarivo (22-235-54, 22-790-94/95). Ambulance service in Antananarivo can be obtained through Espace Medical/Ambulance at 22-625-66, 032-07-822-74 or Polyclinique D Ilafy at 22-425-73/69 or 033-11-458-48. The Embassy recommends that all visitors have medical evacuation insurance before arrival in Madagascar. Several air ambulance companies operate out of Antananarivo. A list can be provided by contacting the Embassy receptionist at 22-212-57. The receptionist can also provide a list of doctors, dentists, hospitals, pharmacies, and veterinarians.

16. TIPS ON HOW TO AVOID BECOMING A VICTIM OF CRIME:

The Embassy Security Office recommends that visitors to Madagascar take the following safety/security precautions during their travels in Madagascar:

-Be aware of your surroundings, especially in crowded streets. If you feel you have been targeted for criminal assault, move into the nearest safe haven i.e., police station, restaurant, hotel, etc.

-Carry only a minimum of valuables. If possible, leave your valuables in a hotel safe deposit box or similar secure container. If watches and/or jewelry must be carried, store them in concealed or protected containers during your transit period.

-When driving or riding in a vehicle, always keep your doors locked and the windows rolled up in order to avoid "snatch and run" crimes.

-Be cautious when purchasing from street vendors. Certain items such as Aepyornis (a large extinct bird) eggs, gemstones, and gold are controlled exports and can create problems upon your departure.

-If establishing a business or residential presence, consider employing a private security service. There are several reputable security firms in Antananarivo. Recommendations can be obtained from the Embassy security office.

Because of Madagascar's poor infrastructure, sub-standard road maintenance and lighting, inadequate communications, and lack of

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repair facilities, travelers venturing outside Antananarivo should adhere to the following:

-Use a reputable guide or tour company to assist in your travel.

-Provide an itinerary and route of travel (i.e., time/date/place of arrival) to a trusted associate or representative.

-Travel with some type of two-way communication device such as a cellular or satellite telephone.

-Travel during daylight hours.

-Bring sufficient funds, spare parts, etc. to take care of emergency situations.

-If possible, travel with other vehicles and/or travelers.

-If possible avoid travel at night outside of urban areas.

17. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

The Consular Section urges all visitors to register with the Embassy upon arrival or before the trip at travel.state.gov. The Embassy is located in downtown Antananarivo at 14-16 rue Rainitovo,

Antsahavola, BP 620, telephone 261-20-22-212-57 or 22-207-18. The Consular Section, Commercial Officer, and Regional Security Officer (RSO) are all located at the Embassy and can be reached at the above numbers. The web site for the U.S. Embassy in Madagascar is: www.Antananarivo.usembassy.gov

There is no established American Chamber of Commerce in Madagascar. However, an Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) does exist. OSAC is designed to assist the American private sector with its security and information needs overseas. The Regional Security Officer is available to meet with representatives of U.S. businesses visiting Madagascar to answer questions about security.

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